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MILITARY AND THE MEDIA; RESOLVING THE CONFLICT

by

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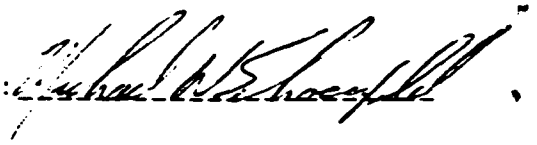
A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Operations Department.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: 

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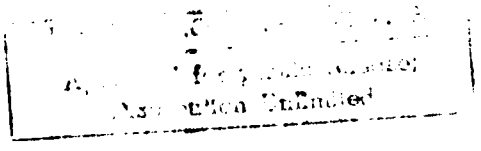

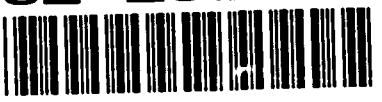

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The U.S. Military/media relationship has been characterized as strained since the revolutionary period of American history. The strained relationship continues today with operational military objectives set on security and the need to prevail and defeat in detail any threatening force. The media's objectives focus on the constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press and the implied requirement for unhindered access to the military operations. These differing objectives are counter to one another in many ways and have caused the military/media relationship to often erupt in contentious accusations of denied rights and hindered responsibilities. This paper enlightens operational commanders of the historic causes of the adversarial relationship between the military and the media, focuses on previous attempts to accommodate each others requirements, and provides insight on methods that could help resolve the conflict.

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Abstract of
MILITARY AND THE MEDIA: RESOLVING THE CONFLICT

The U.S. military/media relationship has been characterized as strained since the revolutionary period of American history. The strained relationship continues today with operational military objectives set on security and the need to prevail and defeat in detail any threatening force. The media's objectives focus on the constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press and the implied requirement for unhindered access to the military operations. These differing objectives are counter to one another in many ways and have caused the military/media relationship to often erupt in contentious accusations of denied rights and hindered responsibilities. This paper enlightens operational commanders of the historic causes of the adversarial relationship between the military and the media, focuses on previous attempts to accommodate each others requirements, and provides insight on methods that could help resolve the conflict. Previous notions of suspicion and incompetent unethical or illegal behavior must be set aside. Ensuring Constitutional rights and responsibilities are accommodated so that the media can report and the military can prevail is critical. Senior officials from both the military and the media must strive to educate and implement programs and procedures that will ensure the American public is served by both institutions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most Americans would agree that in the U.S., the press is charged with providing the public news and information free from government control and yet responsive to the public's societal needs. But, if the press exerts excessive zeal and ignores or violates the rights of citizens, the government has the right and is responsible to curb those excesses in order to protect the citizens. The conflict encountered as these basic responsibilities collide has caused resentment and battle lines to be drawn between the media and the government.

In April 1990, the relationship between the military and the media was characterized as being 'at its most distant and cantankerous since the Civil War.'[1] While media coverage of U.S. military action in Vietnam seems to be at the heart of this hotly debated relationship, restricted access during the Grenada intervention in 1983 and problems with coverage of the Panama action in 1989 are events that also contributed to the aforementioned assertion. And surprisingly, there were indictments of First Amendment violations, excessive control, and censorship during coverage of the Persian Gulf conflict that have continued to keep the military and media at odds with one

another. Indeed, one could argue that there is a war between the military and the media.

Fundamental to this conflict is the issue regarding freedom of the press and the American public's right to know as against the necessity for military security and the nation's right to prevail in a military conflict. Given these differing interests, what are the underlying issues between the military and media conflict? Why does the relationship continue to be strained? And how can this conflict be terminated?

This paper will demonstrate the historical trappings that have led to the deep seated mistrust on both sides; describe the work that has been accomplished to accommodate the requirements of both the military and media; illustrate how the accommodations have functioned; and analyze what should be done to ameliorate this distant and cantankerous situation so that the press can report military events to the American public and military security can be retained so that the Commanders-in-Chief (CINC's) can prevail in war.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL REVIEW

'Give them your name, rank, and serial number.' This is a statement concerning how military personnel should react to the enemy if captured, right? Wrong! This is a statement attributed not so long ago to an unidentified, senior ranking military officer serving in the Pentagon concerning how military personnel should react to the American news media.

'The Defense Department's plan to ban newspaper reporters from selected military operations is incredible. It reveals that the Administration is out of touch with journalism, reality, and the First Amendment.'[2] This is a statement made by Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, former publisher of The New York Times.

These two diverse statements are both about the same subject--the Report of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Media-military Relations panel, commonly known as the Sidle Panel.

While panel reports and policy changes can help normalize the military-media relationship, they cannot change attitudes and beliefs. When General Sherman was on his march through Georgia during the American Civil War, he read in a Confederate newspaper that a St. Louis news dispatch had divulged the size of his army. Furious that such valuable information was being revealed to his enemy, he reputedly said, 'It's impossible to carry on a war with

a free press.'[3] Henry Catto, Jr., felt that this attitude was alive and well in the Pentagon. He suggests 'that deep in the military psyche lies a feeling that the press cost lives, reputations, and indeed victory... in Vietnam. During my pentagon tour...I heard more than one officer vow that never again would that happen.'[4] An unidentified administration official, commenting on the press ban in Grenada, stated, 'The planning of the entire thing was left to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Their attitude tends to be that the press makes it hard to fight wars.'[5] The increased emphasis on the media-military relationship as recommended in the Sidle Panel Report was designed to change this negative perspective. However, if this negative attitude has survived since General Sherman's march, it is probably not going to be easily changed. A brief examination of past military-media relations is necessary to understand the rationale for the current relationship.

During World War II, the military and the media worked closely with each other. Several reasons have been advanced to explain this cooperative relationship. First, the U.S. had a policy of total censorship. Everything that was reported was cleared through a central military censorship program. This program fostered a close informal relationship between commanders and correspondents in which commanders could openly discuss future plans and objectives with the press.[6]

A second factor contributing to the good relationship between the military and the press was the attitude of the

correspondents themselves. These men generally stayed with a unit through numerous campaigns becoming close and supportive of the soldiers and Army itself.[7]

In the early part of the Korean War, censorship was applied to those matters concerned only with military security. However, in 1951, the U.S. press began to criticize the United Nations effort and the conduct of the Syngman Rhee regime. Because of this criticism, MacArthur's headquarters imposed full military censorship on news media releases. Throughout the remainder of the war, correspondents were placed under the jurisdiction of the Army. This arrangement meant that press reports on the war were released the way the military wanted them to be.[8]

The Vietnam War witnessed radical changes in the military-media relationship. In the early part of this conflict, correspondents who were supportive of the Diem regime and the U.S. military effort were usually assigned to Vietnam. However, shortly before the Tet Offensive in 1968, this supportive relationship changed. The most apparent indication of this change occurred in a television broadcast during Tet when Walter Cronkite stated: 'To say that we are mired in a stalemate seems the only realistic yet unsatisfactory conclusion. The only rational way out will be to negotiate, and not as victors.'[9] The Tet Offensive was reported by the press as proof positive that military commanders had been deceiving the press and the American public as to the true military situation.[10] The ensuing loss in credibility and increased criticism the military

and government suffered resulted in an intensely antagonistic relationship with the media.

From the press' point of view, the official information provided by the military was both misleading and self-serving. Evening military briefings in Saigon were referred to as the "5 o'clock follies."[11] To some in the press, their job was no longer to report the facts. They performed their own analysis and, right or wrong, passed it on to the American public in their reporting.[12]

From the military's point of view, the press did a grave disservice to the American people with inaccurate self-serving reporting of the Vietnam War. As the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force cited:

> The military seem to focus their dislike of the media on the supposed adverse impact of television on public opinion during military operations. Among the causes of Hanoi's victory in Indochina, many cite what they perceive as the negative impact on home-front morale of television reporting from the battlefield. This perception, which, oddly, has been reinforced by the repeated claims of some network television journalists that powerful pictures alone brought home the brutal reality of war, is apparently shared, to a great extent, by the public.[13]

Examples include Tet and the battle of Khe Sanh during which correspondents did not understand or correctly interpret battlefield events. The military felt the press twisted these two victories into defeats in the eyes of many Americans.[14] One of the more prominent military criticisms was that media correspondents were not properly trained (accredited) to cover military operations. Freelancers, more concerned with making a

name for themselves that with accurate reporting, seemed to infiltrate the media ranks. Unfortunately, sensationalism found its way into evening news programs which were competing for their share of the Nielson ratings.[15]

CHAPTER III

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS AND GRENADA

Thus, as the Vietnam War came to an end, the U.S. military-media relationship was one of hostility and distrust. Since the Vietnam War, there have been four conflicts which have affected this relationship. The first was the British-Argentine War in the Falkland Islands. During this war, the British press accompanied the military to the islands. However, correspondent reports were censored at the battlefield by Ministry of Defense (MOD) personnel before being transmitted through military communications channels to another MOD center in London. At the center in London, the reports were reviewed by censors a second time before being released. MOD censors were in fact government public-relations officers. British radio and television were allowed only voice links to London; no video was permitted.[16] During this conflict, the British press accused the government of mismanaging and using the media. One thing going for the government, however, was the fact that the British public were united and strongly supportive of the government's position. In fact, any article that criticized the military's operations resulted in virtually thousands of letters of protest from the public rebutting the criticism.[17]

When elements of the United States Armed Forces invaded the Caribbean nation of Grenada on October 25, 1983, Americans went

into battle for the first time in modern history without the media. Even though the relationship between the military and media has at times been strained, the media had never been excluded from a major military action until Grenada.

Neither the media nor the American public were aware of the Grenada invasion until 4 hours after the operation had begun. President Reagan himself announced to the nation that American forces and forces from six Caribbean democracies had begun the invasion of Grenada. As soon as the announcement was made, the American press began to scramble to cover the most important military action of the Reagan Administration. Hundreds of reporters from across the U.S. descended on the island of Barbados hoping to gain access to Grenada. Their quick actions, however, were to no avail for they got no closer until the major fighting was over--more than 48 hours after the first American Marines and Rangers had landed. A small group of journalists who were already on Grenada covering the unfolding stories of unrest were soon discovered by American troops. Believing that they would be allowed to file their reports using the Navy's communication equipment, the journalists quickly accepted an invitation to be flown from Grenada to the USS Guam. However, once aboard, they were denied access to the equipment and found themselves, as one journalist put it, 'more or less captives of the U.S. Navy.'[18] After the initial 48 hours of fighting, a small group of 15 reporters was flown on C-130s to Grenada. Once there, the reporters were guided on a planned tour during which

they were allowed to film captured enemy equipment and areas of previous battles. They were not, however, allowed to go near the actual fighting.[19] As greater access to the island was granted by the military, the furor over the media lockout continued to escalate. Media correspondents and executives began an assault against what to them seemed to be an arrogant military and a secretive administration for perceived denial of rights guaranteed by the First Amendment. Unfortunately, the media's scathing stories about the Reagan Administration and the Department of Defense overshadowed the military's victory in achieving a seriously considered national objective.

The Joint Task Force had efficiently accomplished its goals with only a few days planning. Indeed, final presidential approval for the invasion had been given only 11 hours before the first American Marines assaulted Pearls Airport in northern Grenada. However, all the planning by both civilian and military leaders specifically excluded the media from the initial invasion. At a Pentagon press conference on the day of the invasion, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and General John Vessey, Jr., CJCS, attempted to explain the Grenada operation and the reasons the media were not included. It was stated that 'The necessity for complete secrecy to ensure the success of the surprise attack and concerns over correspondent's safety' were the major factors for excluding press coverage.[20] Off the coast of Grenada, Vice Admiral Metcalf made it clear that he was responsible for the press lockout when he stated, 'The buck stops

with me. If you want to argue with somebody about it, You've got to argue with me, not the DOD, not anybody else but me.[21]

Admiral James D. Watkins, Chief of Naval Operations, defended the military's actions regarding the handling of the media. He stated that:

> In Grenada our combined task force commander had the overwhelming task, with less than 48 hours notice, to draw together a joint task force, develop plans for combat operations, and get his forces safely ashore to achieve their objectives quickly and efficiently. Getting hundreds of cameramen and correspondents...in with the first wave was simply not his primary objective and had to take a back seat under the special circumstances which prevailed. The task force commander fortunately was more concerned about getting his Rangers and Marines into Grenada to carry out his short-fused primary mission with a minimum loss of life. Because of the need for operational security for our troops; because the military could not assure media safety in the anticipated fast-moving pace of events; because there existed no ready, organized, off-the-shelf contingency concept for injecting a small representative media pool similar to those employed in wartime, I find no fault with the on-the-scene commander's actions.[22]

Incensed with the situation over Grenada, the media lashed back with every means at their disposal to dispute the reasons the Reagan Administration and Defense Department had given for locking them out of the operation. The media pointed out that American reporters have been with the military on some of the most dangerous and sensitive missions in American history. American reporters were among the first on Normandy Beach on D-Day, and a reporter was specifically asked to fly on the Enola Gay's mission to drop the atomic bomb. The New York Times addressed the reasons for the media lockout in an editorial published 3 days after the invasion. The editorial stated that:

> Defense Secretary Weinberger said reporters were banned because the troops were unable to guarantee any kind of safety. Safety? Let Mr. Weinberger consider the Iwo Jima Memorial, not a mile from his office--the Marines raising the flag on Mount Suribachi. How much safety does he think was guaranteed to Joe Rosenthal...who took that famous picture? Let Mr. Weinberger think about at least 53 reporters who died in Southeast Asia between 1961 and 1975. They well knew that the Government bore no responsibility for their safety. So did the Government.[23]

As the sparring between the Administration and the media continued, the American public began to voice their opinion. Much to the chagrin of the media, a poll taken by The Washington Post and ABC News showed that 65 percent of the American people favored President Reagan's actions in Grenada.[24] The public's approval of the Grenada invasion and press exclusion are examples of disfavor and contempt the public had of the American media.

Columnist Haynes Johnson stated, "If you took a poll today about how Americans feel about the news media...I'll bet you'd find the regard in which we are held to have sunk even lower in the public mind."[25] An even more scathing estimate of the American media's declining image was given by A.G.B. Metcalf when he stated:

> ...The First Amendment...is a right reserved to the American people, not the American news media. This freedom from restraint...can in no way be construed as a patent conferring special privilege upon the existent newspaper business, much less on the television industry. To the contrary, it imposes an implicit responsibility upon the media for all they say. It is in the matter of this continuing responsibility that the media are being tested today to ascertain how effectively they are meeting their obligations to the American people and to their government which, before all else, must survive as a functioning instrument. That the media are failing to meet the test is vividly acknowledged, both by the public and those elements of the press which have managed to preserve some sense of perspective.[26]

CHAPTER IV

THE SIDLE PANEL

Military leaders realized the necessity to calm the ever-increasing adversarial relationship that had developed with the media. With this necessity in mind, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff announced on November 29, 1983, the formation of a commission "to seek the opinions of editorial and publishers associations on news coverage of future military operations such as the U.S. invasion of Grenada."[27] Heading the panel was Major General (Ret) Winant Sidle, a former chief of information for the Army, hence the Sidle Panel. Invitations were sent to written and broadcast journalist associations asking each to provide members to serve on the panel.

Unfortunately, even though the associations fully supported the principle and aims of the Sidle Panel, no members were provided as they felt "it was inappropriate for media members to serve on a government panel."[28] In a second attempt to form a panel and still maintain credibility, the Pentagon sent invitations to "experienced retired media personnel and representatives of schools of journalism who were experts in military-media relations."[29] The panel was formed after the second attempt and meetings were held from February 6 to 10, 1984.

In the opening remarks, Major General (Ret) Sidle stated,

'We have agreed that the media should cover military maneuvers to the extent possible.'[30] This statement was based on the panel's study of 24 written responses to a questionnaire that had been sent to all potential panel members and various major news organizations.

The first three and one-half days of hearings were opened to the press and public. The panel heard presentations from 25 senior media representatives speaking for 19 news organizations and the chiefs/directors of Public Affairs for the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Ironically, the final session was held behind closed doors. In explanation, Major General (Ret) Sidle said the final sessions would be closed 'because you cannot have free and frank discussions of the issues with the press present.'[31]

The Sidle Panel final report was released August 23, 1984. Accompanying the report's release, Mr. Weinberger in a press release stated:

> I have directed the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) to take the necessary steps to implement those portions of the final report which meet the Panel's criteria of providing maximum news media coverage of U.S. military operations consistent with military security and the safety of U.S. forces.[32]

The initial reaction to the Sidle Report was favorable by both the news media and military. Two major news organizations, the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the American Newspaper Publishers Association, issued a joint statement that called the panel's work 'exhaustive and productive,' and said, 'Secretary Weinberger has called for renewed professional cooperation...and that is what he will get from the press.'[33]

The military considered the report as a beneficial aid to improving relations with the media and within days had asked for comments on how a press-pool should be organized. Additionally, joint planning manuals were changed to reflect the requirement for combat-command public affairs officers to provide guidance to commanders concerning media involvement when an operational warning order is received. A Public Affairs Response Cell was formed to keep the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) informed of all real world contingency planning and press coverage options during operations.[34]

The press pool's composition was finalized in October 1984 and consisted of four television reporters--from ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN; one reporter each from the AP and UPI wire services; one newspaper reporter chosen by the American Newspaper Publishers Association; one reporter representing Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report; a radio reporter; a photographer; and a two-person television camera and sound team.[35]

CHAPTER V

TESTING THE PRESS POOL

The press pool concept as recommended by the Sidle Panel is an official Department of Defense sponsored group and is considered part of a military exercise or contingency operation. The decision to deploy the pool is made by the Secretary of Defense with final approval granted by the president.[36] The press pool has been extensively evaluated since the composition of its membership was finalized. Overall, there have been eight exercise evaluations and three operational deployments.

The first evaluation took place between April 21 and 25, 1985, in Honduras. This test covered the scheduled Commander U.S. Forces Caribbean exercise Universal Trek 1985. For this exercise, the press pool consisted of 3 military escorts and 10 media representatives from the Associated Press, United Press International, Mutual Broadcasting System, Newsweek, Cable News Network, Dow Jones News Service, Copley Press, and the New York Times. The press pool test did not get off to a very good start as six hours after alert notification the media had breached security and leaked the story.[37] Even though operational security was a failure, the effort proved valuable in identifying strengths and weaknesses in both the media's and the military's planning of the DOD press pool's deployment, employment, and redeployment.

On the 26th of April, there was a formal press pool debriefing with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Michael I. Burch. Mr. Burch started the debriefing by pointing out that 'ever since Grenada we've been worried about how to support the media in a sensitive operation, maintaining mission security, and protecting the lives of American service people.' Mr. Burch mentioned that while working out press pool details he 'had a high degree of frustration because every time I met with a group, the demands were either excessive or it produced stories at the expense of someone else.'[38]

The most significant point the media debriefed from the first test was probably put best by Mr. Kim Willensen from Newsweek when he stated: 'You took too good of care of our bodies and not enough care in any way at all of our professional duties. We had to have filing facilities and they just weren't available.'[39] Not having efficient facilities in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, may be pretty close to reality when one considers the locations of possible areas of future conflict. Be that as it may, there were some communications equipment failures on the USS Nassau which adversely affected both the media's and military's efforts to communicate via message traffic. Even with the initial breach of security, the exercise was described as a 'learning experience' for both the military and the media and one that 'needs to be tested again.'

The second press pool evaluation took place on the 19th of September, 1985, in Exercise 'Double Eagle' conducted at Fort

Campbell, Kentucky. The press pool evaluation had two major objectives: 'To test operational security and the ability to provide timely filing of copy for the media.'[40]

Both operational security and timely filing were assessed to be greatly improved over that experienced during exercise Universal Trek 1985. However, 'Due to the limited duration and scope of the exercise, the extent of improvement and whether similar improvement would be evident in an austere exercise area is uncertain.'[41]

The third evaluation of the press pool occurred on December 10 and 11, 1985, in conjunction with the Navy and Marine Exercise 'Kernal Usher 86-1' conducted off the southern coast of California. This exercise built upon the lessons learned from the two previous exercises. Operational security was maintained for more than 28 hours, and once released, timely filing of media reports was accomplished.[42]

The fourth evaluation of the media occurred on August 1 and 2, 1986, in conjunction with U.S. Central Command's joint exercise 'Gallant Eagle 86' conducted at Twenty Nine Palms, California. This press pool test involved 13 media representatives and 3 military escorts, the largest number of people up to that time. Unfortunately, security problems occurred within the media sector. As the press pool was departing from Andrews AFB, a reporter contacted OSD/PA and stated he had heard a rumor that the pool had deployed. The 'rumor' was dealt with and no story appeared. Media bureau

chiefs were debriefed on the incident and instructed to analyze their operations in an effort to identify the cause of the leak and procedurally correct it.[43]

Several more exercise evaluations were conducted before the first operational press pool deployment occurred on 19 July 1987 for Operation Earnest Will. Prior to the deployment the Pentagon and media bureau chiefs agreed to a set of rules regarding security, review procedures, and press filing. After this deployment the participating reporters prepared their 'lessons learned'. First, and foremost, was the consensus that regardless of the difficulties, the American public was better served by the press' having covered Earnest Will from the Persian Gulf rather than from Washington D.C.. Second, they felt that delays in 'sensitive' press releases were an unnecessary measure taken by the pentagon. When a bureau chief protested the hold-ups, contending they represented censorship, the pentagon's spokesman Mr. Robert Sims denied the charge stating:

> None of them were censored or changed in any way. Veracity, not timeliness, was the pools' purpose, he argued: The purpose of the pool is not to ensure that they report the news first, but to ensure that news representatives are with our troops on operations where there would otherwise be no independent on-the-scene reporting.[44]

On 19 October 1987, the biggest news coverage dispute during Operation Earnest Will occurred when an Iranian oil platform was shelled in retaliation for a missile attack on a U.S. flagged tanker. To the dismay of the media, this 'made-for-press' action was not covered as the pool was inexplicably kept on the shore.

By not ensuring the media was in a position to cover this story, the Navy was accused of censorship by denying access.

By far the most significant action occurred in April 1988 as retaliation was taken after the USS Samuel B. Roberts struck a mine. This time press pool members were on the bridge of the USS Jack Williams during attacks on the Iranian frigate Sahand. Operation Earnest Will's press pool/military relations during the spring of 1988 had dramatically improved from a year earlier. It was generally considered that although not perfect, the press pool;

> proved valuable and should not be allowed to wither away on grounds that it doesn't deliver the big story every day. As long as the U.S. Government-and particularly the Defense Department-maintains a policy that weighs in favor of disclosure, important events...aren't likely to go unreported.[45]

CHAPTER VI

OPERATION JUST CAUSE -- PANAMA

The press pool was activated for it's second operational deployment on 19 December 1989 for Operation Just Cause. As the anticipation of the pool members, being first on the scene, was high, their expectations were far from being fulfilled. Once again the hotly debated conflict between the media and the military was rekindled with accusations of First Amendment rights violations and censorship through restricted access.

The press pool did not arrive from Washington D.C. until four hours after the action had been initiated and their first reports were not filed until six hours later. For the next four days the press pool's access to the situation was strictly controlled by the Army. When the members returned home they were frustrated and angry charging that 'they scarcely saw any action, except on one occasion when their driver took a wrong turn.'[46]

As complaints and accusations increased in number and fervor, Mr. Pete Williams, ASD/PA, asked Mr. Fred Hoffman, a former Associated Press reporter for twenty years and member of the Sidle Commission, to research the press pool deployment and provide findings and recommendations. Mr. Hoffman made his report and provided 17 recommendations that he believed would improve future press pool operations.

In his report, Mr. Hoffman cited the Defense Departments excessive concern for secrecy as being responsible in keeping the press pool from reporting the opening battles of the operation. Because of Defense Secretary Cheney's secrecy-driven decision, 'the pool was called out too late and arrived too late to cover the decisive U.S. assaults in that brief war. Military leaders played no part in shaping that decision.'[47] Excessive secrecy was also a factor in preventing timely press pool planning.

The lack of adequate planning led to difficulties in transportation, security, coverage, and report filing. Besides accusations of First Amendment rights and censorship violations, there were 'suggestions that the pool was being manipulated to serve the Bush Administration's political and diplomatic interests.'[48] When Mr. Hoffman could find no evidence that supported these accusations, he suggested it was more good intentions gone bad than an actual planned agenda.

Besides the excessive secrecy, there seems to have been a major administration issue regarding whether the press pool would originate from Washington D.C. or be organized with reporters already in Panama. Although there was never a doubt about using the press pool to cover the operation, there was significant discussion concerning how to implement the pool. Secretary Cheney decided on 19 December to use the Washington D.C. based pool as the Department of Defense was confident that operational security could be retained, press pool members knew the ground

rules, and that the pool was created for this kind of situation.[49]

In this regard, Mr. Hoffman points out that Secretary Cheney was misinformed. The press pool, as organized by the Sidle Commission, was to provide U.S. news personnel early access to American military action in remote areas where coverage could not normally be accomplished. Panama, with its resident U.S. press corps and existing base structure did not meet the criteria for necessitating activation of a press pool. The use of the press pool in Panama reflects how the Pentagon's perception of the pool's purpose has evolved since originated.

Under the premise that DOD is commited to the press pool and would make every effort to implement and use the pool's members to serve the interest of informing the American public about military activities, ASD/PA immediately implemented five of Mr. Hoffman's recommendations, began refining six for future implementation, and took the remaining six recommendations under consideration. The following recommendations from Mr. Hoffman's report were implemented by ASD/PA:

> First, the ASD/PA must be prepared to weigh in aggressively with the Secretary of Defense and the JCS Chairman where necessary to overcome any secrecy or other obstacles blocking prompt deployment of a pool to the scene of action. Second, after a pool had been deployed, the ASD/PA must be kept informed in a timely fashion of any hitches that may arise. He must be prepared to act immediately, to contact the JCS Chairman, the Joint Staff Director of Operations and other senior officers who can serve to break through any obstacles to the pool. Third, the ASD/PA should study a proposal by several of the Panama poolers that future pools deploy in two sections. The first section would be very small and would include only reporters and photographers. The second section, would bring in supporting gear, such as

satellite uplink equipment. Fourth, the national media pool should never again be herded as a single unwieldy unit. It should be broken up after arriving at the scene of action to cover a wider spectrum of the story and then be reassembled periodically to share the reporting results. And Fifth, during deployments, there should be regular briefings for pool newsmen and newswomen by senior operations officers so the poolers will have an up-to-date and complete overview of the progress of an operation they are covering.[50]

In his 182305Z May 90 message to the ten CINCs, the CJCS reminded these commanders that 'successful operations are not total successes unless the media aspects are properly handled.'[51] Realizing that the media aspects of military operations will get national and international attention, the Chairman directed these commanders to pay personal attention to the planning of media coverage. They were reminded of the sensitivities of host nation requirements, the benefits of daily comprehensive unclassified operational briefings, and the necessity for access to areas of activities and key command and staff personnel. Essentially, the Chairman directed the implementation of the Hoffman report recommendations that had been accepted by ASD/PA.

In May 1990, the cantankerous relationship from a month earlier began to smooth itself out with the serious intent to fix what had gone wrong in Panama. However, the military/media relationship would not have much time to mend itself before the next military action, Desert Shield/Storm, occurred.

CHAPTER VII

DESERT SHIELD/STORM -- THE GULF WAR

The real and near-real time saturated news coverage of 'the gulf war' was something entirely new for the American public. During Vietnam, the last television war, nightly news reports were after the fact film or videotape. Grenada and Panama were actually over too fast or were enveloped in such tight security that there was not a lot of reporting. But Desert Shield/Storm, the first full-scale military action conducted in the age of real-time satellite communications, was relayed around the world as events occurred. And yet the media once again made accusations of First Amendment violations, censorship, denied access, delayed filing, and something new, favoritism in forming press pools. Most likely, these accusations were the result of the media, on a whole, feeling as though they had suffered defeat at the hands of the American military just as the Iraqis had been completely overwhelmed in Kuwait. Indeed, as Richard Zoglin pointed out:

> Throughout the war, the Pentagon did a masterly job of controlling the flow of information. The success of the military on the public relations front was a textbook campaign that may serve as a model for wars to come. The press in the meantime, has a major job of image rebuilding ahead.[32]

Even though the gulf war was exhaustively covered, the news

was managed by the military in a variety of ways. The press pool was activated and retained throughout the conflict. However, when USAF F-15s landed in Saudi Arabia, there were no western reporters in-country to cover the event. In fact the Saudi government had not yet determined whether to grant visas to journalists. When queried, the Saudis did agree to accept U.S. reporters if the military could accommodate their deployment. The press pool was to accommodate host nation sensitivities while providing news for the American public. The first reporters arrived in Saudi Arabia on 13 August. By December, the Saudi government had began granting visas and the total number of reporters, editors, photographers, producers, and technicians had grown to nearly 800. Just before the war began in January, the total had increased to nearly 1400.[53] For the press pool, membership had gone from 17 in August to 159 when the ground campaign started.

Because of the coverage restrictions the press pool imposed, some reporters turned 'freelancer' or 'pool buster' depending on who was describing their actions. These reporters, in the competitive spirit of getting the big-scoop first, took significant risk tc provide what they thought was a fuller picture of the war. Military officials maintained that the press pool was the best way to provide the media access and safety. But CBS correspondent Bob Simon and his three-man crew accepted the personal risk and struck out on their own. Unfortunately, they were captured by Iraqis near the Kuwaiti border.[54]

It is interesting to note that during the planning for the war coverage, several bureau chiefs informed ASD/PA that the security of reporters was no concern of the governments. But according to Pete Williams, it is unrealistic to ignore the moral dilemma of such a suggestion. Mr. Williams points out:

> We were on the phone to CBS News nearly every day that Bob Simon and his crew were missing, and we were greatly relieved when they came through the ordeal okay. And when a group of U.S. journalists was captured in Iraq after the ceasefire four news industry executives wrote to the President, saying that no U.S. forces should withdraw from Iraq until the issue of the journalists was resolved.[55]

Live television reports covering the daily operations briefings in Riyadh and Washington D.C. and especially those of CNN's Peter Arnett and others who broadcast from the enemies capital, Baghdad, added a new dimension to media coverage of the American military in action. While covering the live daily briefings, the American public saw reporters asking difficult, often contentious and sometimes impolite questions. In the briefings reporters often disregarded the standing statement that questions involving sensitive information would not be answered. Paying little heed, questions ranged from 'What date are we going to start the ground attack?' to 'Where would you say our forces are most vulnerable to attack, and how could the Iraqis best exploit those weaknesses?' and 'Are we planning an amphibious invasion of Kuwait, and if so, where exactly would that be?'[56]

With almost continuous gulf war television coverage, the American public and press developed starkly different opinions concerning the role of journalism and need for information about

the war. To the press' surprise, the public spoke out saying reporters were 'too pushy in press briefings, too insensitive to the need for secrecy, and too intent on looking for bad news.'[57] In the publics eye, all to often the press appeared to be undermining the war effort. Although the level of intelligence value may not be readily determined, if American military men and women had lost their lives due wholly or in part to television reporting, the public would have undoubtedly been more incensed at the press and their reporting practices.

Live television coverage from behind enemy lines received an even stronger response from the American public. 'What are they first -- journalists or Americans.'[58] Peter Arnett and CNN gave every appearance of providing the enemy a conduit for live demoralizing propaganda directed against the American government through the American public. Live television certainly adds to the dilemma posed by the need to report the news versus the need to prevail in a conflict.

With plunging credibility, the press is in fact seeking ways to improve their image and battlefield reporting as they perceived the military to be controlling instead of providing access to Desert Shield/Storm activities with the press pool. As identified in a coordinated media letter to Secretary of Defense Cheney:

> Our sense is that virtually all major news organizations agree that the flow of information to the public was blocked, impeded or diminished by the policies and practices of the Department of Defense. Pools did not work. Stories and pictures were late or lost. Access to the men and women in the field was interfered with by a needless system of

> military escorts and copy review. These conditions meant we could not tell the public the full story of those who fought the nation's battle....Clearly, in Desert Storm, the military establishment embraced pools as a long term way of life. The pool system was used in the Persian Gulf war not to facilitate news coverage but to control it.[59]

In the time since Desert Storm, the media, represented by six major news organizations and ASD/PA have met and are nearing agreement on future military operation coverage guidelines. The Associated Press announced on 17 April 1992, that a set of nine draft guidelines have been discussed and establish ...'a starting point that differs from the operational situation in the Persian Gulf in significant ways.'[60] Mr. Pete Williams, ASD/PA, has said that the draft guidelines will be presented to senior pentagon and military officials for their review. Once the guidelines are finalized, it is probable that they will be distributed in the form of Defense Department Directives.

The guidelines are an attempt to resolve most of the contentious issues raised by the media. In essence the government would accommodate open and independent reporting as the principal means of coverage of U.S. military operations. Press pools would not serve as the standard means of covering military action. However, if pools are the only way to provide early access, they will be used but should be disbanded at the earliest (within 24 to 36 hours) possible time. It is recognized that press pools may also be the best way to cover unique or specific events in remote locations. When press pools are active, press transportation will be the responsibility of the military. Additionally, journalists operating in the combat zone

will be accredited by the military and will be required to abide by a clear set of military security ground rules. Violation would mean suspension of accreditation and expulsion from the combat zone. Except for special operations, journalists will be provided unhindered access to all major military units. Unit public affairs officers will continue to function as the principal liaison with the media, but would not interfere with reporting. For filing stories, the military will accommodate, consistent with its capabilities, press pool releases. When the pool is not active, the press will file their stories by other means.[61]

One issue that ASD/PA and the media representatives could not come to closure on is the military's security review process. The press continues to fear censorship while the military continues to fear breaches in security and the potential compromise of sensitive combat information that could benefit the enemy or lead to needless loss of American lives. There are significant implications for the operational commander as a result of these guidelines.

CHAPTER VIII

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER

In questioning whether the conflict between the military and media could be eliminated, General Michael J. Dugan stated:

> No, and there are no simple answers for improving relations. Nevertheless, it would be advantageous for both institutions to find a continuing, independent forum for discussion and for researching ways to better serve the public interests...It would be a useful start if each viewed the other in the same light (professional) - and acted accordingly[62]

There are recurring media criticisms that military commanders must understand when the media covers U.S. military activities. The criticisms center on First Amendment rights and censorship. Peripheral to these criticisms are media accusations concerning excessive control of access, filing delays, press reviews, and press pool procedures.

From the media's perspective, 'freedom of the press guaranteed in the First Amendment to the Constitution is being ignored and violated, both legally and ethically.'[63] But problems go beyond this fundamental argument. By in large, the media feels that 'military officers have vague impressions, emotional reactions, and gut feelings about the press and television, but are, in fact, operating in ignorance.'[64] While ignorance is a strong word, the statement is founded in the apparent lack of understanding of the function of the press and television and limited exposure to the media in general. But as

there is more interaction with the military, the media may be seen as having a more defensive attitude as they have begun to be questioned by the public on their ethics, motives, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility.

From a military point of view, the conflict between the media and the military is a conflict between two legitimate and constitutionally directed public interests; A guaranteed free press and a sometimes secretive national defense are legitimate pursuits.

Handling the dilemma posed by these sometimes competing and potentially volatile requirements is the military commanders most pressing information management task. With primary planning guidance already provided by the CJCS and the Joint Operational Planning System, coverage of major military activities through national press pools will continue to be the backbone of the Department of Defense's quest to ensure rapid media accessibility to often remotely located military activities.

Some basic guidelines for dealing with the media that apply not only to national emergencies but to day-to-day activities as well are essential for commanders if they are expected to succeed. First, truthfulness is an imperative. As General Colin Powell stated in an address to the National Press Club, "I do not believe a public official,...having sworn an oath to the constitution and the people of the United States, has any part in any set of circumstances to lie, either to Congress or to the press."[65] Coincident with the first imperative is the second;

stick to what is proper for a military officer to speak about. While the First Amendment gives every right for a reporter to ask a question, nothing requires an answer. Several vivid accounts of recent incidents matching this imperative are the Desert Shield/Storm daily operations press briefings and the media interview and subsequent dismissal by Secretary Cheney of Air Force General Michael J. Dugan. Third, it is essential to know who the reporter is. This may be likened to knowing the threat. And Fourth, ensure the ground rules of the interview are completely understood and adhered to.

While the list of guidelines could continue, the important point for the military commander is one of being understanding and aware. Ignorance and indifference toward the military/media relationship is ill-advised. Continued antagonism -- from the military or media -- in favor of self-serving interests is not in the public's or Nation's best interest.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The media must provide the American public with a valid, factual, unbiased report of military affairs. They must realize that accusations of denial of First Amendment rights and press censorship are not valid excuses for inaccurate, contemptuous reporting. In 1983 Mr. Jim Shepley, former president of Time Incorporated, stated most appropriately:

> The public is not buying the media lashback over Grenada. I hesitate to suggest it, but I fear the average American may be more likely to believe the Pentagon than perhaps CBS, NBC, ABC or, perish the thought, The New York Times or The Washington Post. (Military correspondents of the past) did not approach every military operation as a potential scandal--another Watergate in the modern sense--and if we had we would have earned the same response from the American people that the media is enjoying today.[60]

For the American media to regain credibility, they must change the perception that their only real objective is to find fault. In 1984 Admiral James D. Watkins expressed this perception well when he said:

> It almost seems as if (the media) can't stand legitimate victory. They are always probing for failures, and trying to find fault where none exists. Have Watergate and Vietnam so contorted our outlook that the thought of victory has somehow become quasi-repugnant? Or is it because when things go well there is no controversy, and hence no news to report? We must constantly question sources of our information and where these analysts and experts get theirs. Are they trying to stir up controversy where none exists? Have some lost touch with grass- roots America?[61]

The military and the media have had and will continue to have distinct functions to perform which are vitally important to the continued freedom of America. The adversarial conflict between the two groups must be resolved. If the us-versus-them relationship persists, no one will be the victor.

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